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ABSTRACT

Innovation in elementary education is the theme of a five-year program developed by 23 European nations which is described in this paper. The project began with a conference held in Liechtenstein in 1982 which confirmed the importance of broadening the primary school curriculum beyond simply teaching the basics to include understanding other cultures and democratic values. In 1983 the program focused on innovation and the study of a restricted number of areas of innovation such as new technologies and human rights education. The second year, 1984, was the beginning of the operational phase of the project. Key factors in the innovation process were identified and a series of educational research workshops on specific curriculum areas began. Case studies were also commissioned. For 1985 two symposia are planned on childrens' needs and new technologies and five more case studies will be commissioned. Plans are also underway for 1986 and for a final conference to be held in 1987. Appendices include a brief description of the case studies and an annotated bibliography of relevant documents. (IS)

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL COOPERATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT NO. 8 ON «INNOVATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION»

SECRETARIAT MEMORANDUM

prepared by the
Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport

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1. INTRODUCTION

"The innovation of Primary Education" is the theme of a five year project in which the 23 member States (1) of the Council for Cultural Cooperation (CDCC)(2) of the Council of Europe are at present taking part. This Project is the main school activity on the CDCC's school programme and it concerns the age-group 5/6 to 11/12. It started in 1983 and is due to last until 1986.

This project is the response to a need in member States to look at a period of compulsory education which has so far not often been examined and discussed in depth in the framework of an intergovernmental organisation and which is at present the object of review or reform in most of Western Europe.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The new Project fills a gap in the CDCC's recent work on the education of young children/young people. The first school project of the CDCC (1974-79) dealt with pre-school education and the early development of the child.

In the late 70s, under the pressure of growing unemployment and its impact on the social insertion of the young, the CDCC devoted its next school project to upper secondary education. The pre-school Project was thus followed, from 1978 to 1982, by a project known under the title "Preparation for life", which concerned the 14 to 19 age-group.

The project recommended a broad approach to youth problems covering:

(i) personal development;

(ii) life in a democratic society;

(iii) world of work;

(iv) cultural life.

It also indicated that, although much could be done at secondary level towards a solution of youth problems, such as unemployment and marginalisation, quite a number of them could be prevented or lessened through earlier identification, thus recognising the vital importance of the early years of compulsory education.

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(1) Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Greece, Holy See, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom.

(2) The CDCC is the committee responsible for educational and cultural policy within the Council of Europe.

These results together with a common concern at national level for a review of primary education, brought the Council of Europe to concentrate its attention for the next few years on the first period of compulsory education and thus, in a way, pick up the threads of the pre-school project.

3. THE LIECHTENSTEIN CONFERENCE

(A conference is an ad hoc meeting at national level to illustrate the work of the Council of Europe on a given subject.)

This Project represents the first sustained effort undertaken by the Council of Europe in the field of primary education. In an effort to base the project on as wide a variety of information and opinions as possible, a consultation of non-governmental organisations concerned with education was held early in 1982, the results of which were presented at the first consultation of member States on the organisation of their primary education systems, the policies they have adopted and the problems they are faced with. This consultation took place at a conference on "Primary education in Western Europe, aims trends and problems", held in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, from 9 to 12 November 1982. The Conference confirmed the importance of the work about to be undertaken by the Council of Europe on primary education:

> "Primary education is of fundamental importance in the development of all children and, hence, of all Europeans. It has to provide more than a narrow grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic, although these remain important. It has to widen children's perspectives of their immediate and wider physical and cultural environment. It has to help children to acquire and practise democratic values of tolerance, participation, responsibility and respect for the rights of others. It has to stimulate the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes to learning which will shape their future responses to the demands made upon them by the secondary school, by the work place and by the family and community. Primary education is, thus, a crucial foundation stage in what will be a process of life-long learning".

It showed a variety of approaches to implement innovations in primary education and identified a number of common concerns.

These can be summarised as an overall trend towards a better knowledge of children's development, bio-rythms and learning processes, in order to take better account of their specific needs.

4. 1983: THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PROJECT

All member States have been asked to submit a national report on primary education as background information for the Vaduz Conference and for the Council of Europe Project in general. These reports as well as the results of the Conference itself indicated that most countries have felt the need for an innovation of primary education and have consequently adopted or at least elaborated guidelines for it. The common problem, at present, seems to be implementation of innovation, ie the way in which the desired changes are best to be brought about.

Such a desire for changes arises mainly from a better understanding of the cultural, technical and economic changes that have recently taken place in our societies and their impact on primary education.

The managing group of the Project (the Project Group) thus decided to concentrate its work on the innovation of primary education, devoting particular attention to its implementation.

The Project consists of:

(i) general reflection on innovation through symposia;

(ii) study of restricted number of innovatory areas eg new technologies, human rights education.

It agreed that this innovation should be aimed at catering for as wide a range of children's needs as possible, whether they are intrinsic to the child and his development or have arisen from recent changes in society.

A Symposium (1) was held on «Innovation of primary education in Western Europe», Han (Belgium), 17-21 October 1983, which pointed at a number of key factors for innovation processes.

A key role in the implementation of innovation is obviously played by teachers. Special attention will have to be devoted to the role they play in the innovation process, and to the type of training, both initial and in-service, that they should receive.

Of particular importance for a primary school aware of children's needs and open to its surroundings, is the kind of specialised help and advice teachers require in order to develop this new pedagogical approach. Especially crucual is the way in which this help is to be offered and structured so that full use is made of it in the classroom without infringing on the professional autonomy of the teacher.

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(1) a Symposium is a meeting at national level aiming at developing a number of ideas and suggestions on an important aspect of a project for further work.

Perhaps the most sensitive and essential type of contacts between the school and its surrounding community are the contacts with the parents. A study on the subject has been commissioned by the Project Group on the basis of several meetings and the issue will probably be looked at in greater depth at a later stage in the Project.

In order to give the Project an important practical aspect, the Project Group called for the setting-up of a school contact plan to bring into contact about ten schools undergoing comparable types of innovation in different member States. The Plan, was started in 1984, and should enable the Project to take into account the results of these innovation experiences and to feed into the Project the reactions of teachers, educators and parents to the ideas and proposals resulting from its more theoretical and conceptual work.

It was agreed that further information on innovation experiences at present undertaken in member States should be provided in the form of case-studies, short evaluation reports of significant but perhaps isolated attempts to innovate primary education.

5. 1984: THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PROJECT

1983 was the first year of the Project and it can thus be defined as a year of reflection devoted to the task of translating into an operational programme the guidelines and wishes of national authorities. 1984 represented the beginning of the operational phase of the Project.

The general reflection on innovation policies was continued through a Symposium on «Management of innovation in primary education», Noordwijk, Netherlands, 8-12 October 1984. Starting from a close examination of the recent restructuring of primary education in the Netherlands, the need for a well planned and explicit overall implementation policy at different levels (local, regional, national) was stressed for any successful large-scale innovation process.

A number of key factors in the innovation process were identified:

(i) a well planned system for monitoring and evaluating the innovation;

(ii) a coherent teacher-training policy resulting from efficient and harmonious links between teacher-training establishments and schools' advisory services;

(iii) the transferability of the experience of experimental schools;

(iv) continuity between primary and secondary school policies

A series of educational research workshops on specific curriculum areas also began in 1984 with an examination of mathematics teaching (Puidoux-Chexbres, Switzerland, 1-4 May 1984), followed by a reflection of science and new technologies in the primary school (Edinburgh, 3-6 September 1984). Both research workshops clearly indicated the need for the results of education research to be brought to the knowledge of educators and policy makers in the initial phases of the innovation process and be integrated in its planning.

In 1984 the Contact School Plan came into being with the aim of:

(i) exchanging innovation projects in primary education already underway in Europe;

(ii) obtaining the view of teachers and educators actively involved in innovation on the ideas developed within the Project at the theoretical level.

The twelve schools that take part in the Project are involved in projects of considerable importance at national level.

The first four case-studies were commissioned, two of them on the issue of specific needs of children, and two on the introduction of new technologies in the primary school. These are in fact two of the major concerns of the Project and the case-studies will allow the gathering of more information on the practical problems of implementing innovation in these areas. (Appendix I)

6. OUTLOOK ON 1985

The two issues of children's needs and new technologies in the primary school will be looked at in depth at two major symposia in 1985. The first one in Italy in the spring will deal with children's special needs whereas the second one in Denmark in the autumn will consider the implications of new technologies for the primary school in as broad a sense as possible.

The discussion on children's needs will be backed by a research workshop on child development (Madrid, 17-21 September 1985).

The general reflection on innovation will be continued through the Contact School Plan to discuss in more detail the views and problems of schools actually involved in an innovation process.

Five more case-studies will be commissioned. Two on the problems of primary schools in deprived areas, one on classroom organisation, one one language teaching and one on school-parents relationship (Appendix I).

7. HOPES FOR 1986

A number of activities are at this stage envisaged for the last year of the Project:

(i) a Symposium on «Implementation of innovation in primary education at local level», Sweden, autumn 1986;

(ii) a research workshop on «Reading and writing skills» (date and place to be decided);

(iii) evaluation meeting of the Contact School Plan;

(iv) five case-studies (topics still to be decided).

The findings and conclusions of the Project will be drawn together in a report which will be the main working document for the Final Conference.

8. THE FINAL CONFERENCE

The Final Conference of the Project will take place in France during the first half of 1987. It is hoped to hold the Conference at ministerial level. The aim of the Final Conference is to inform national authorities and the educational world of the Council of Europe member States about the work and results of the Project.

APPENDIX I

1. Case-studies commissioned in 1984

Country	Subject	Author
FRANCE	Use of micro-computers in the primary school	Prof. R. DIESCBOURG, Luxembourg
GREECE	Improvement of the creative and esthetic skills of children through art and drama	Prof. S. ERIKSSON, Norway
ICELAND	Improvement of teaching methods and methods of evaluation	Prof. M. GALTON, United Kingdom
UNITED KIGNDOM	Use of micro-computers in the primary school	Mr Drs. HERMANS, Netherlands

2. Case-studies to be commissioned in 1985

Country	Subject	Author
AUSTRIA	Incorporation of independent learning sessions in normal lessons	United Kingdom on Prof. Galton's suggestion
FRANCE	ZEP (Educational priority area) Relationship between schools and between the school and its environment	Belgium or Spain
IRELAND	In-service training and additional equipment for schools in deprived areas	Scandanavia
ITALY	Media education and the acquisition of basic linguistic tools with involvement of pre-school children, handicapped and parents	Belgium
NORWAY	Parents-school relationship	Austria

APPENDIX II

Bibliography

Conference on "Primary Education in Western Europe: aims, problems and trends" (Vaduz, 9-12 November 1982)

by Colin RICHARDS, July 1983

(doc. DECS/EGT (83) 64)

Report on the conference at Vaduz, in Liechtenstein, organised by the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe (CDCC), which acknowledged the importance of a re-assessment of primary school education in deciding to devote its new schools project to it, from 1983 to 1986.

This meeting was an essential part of the preparatory phase of the new project and provided an opportunity to clarify its objectives, scope, programme and organisation.

Examination of current problems, aims and trends in teaching for the five and six to 11 and 12 year olds in the 23 states participating.

Towards closer collaboration between the home and the school

A Norwegian Government pilot project in the compulsory elementary school in Norway, August 1983 (doc. DECS/EGT (83) 51)

Report on a workshop organised in Norway to improve communication between parents and teachers. Collaboration between them is very important since we know that the child whose parents relate closely to the teacher feels more secure and happier at school and thus is more disposed to learn and make friends.

International Federation of Teachers Associations

Resolution on the theme: "For a renovation of the primary school"

Malta Conference, 1-4 August 1983

(doc. DECS/EGT (83) Misc. 45)

Presentation of the conditions for an urgently needed complete regeneration of primary schooling and of the aims to be pursued: teaching must be adapted to new knowledge and necessities, it must place the child at the centre of all concerns. One of the main objectives is to teach the child how to learn and prepare him for lifelong progress. The conference pronounced itself in favour of an education based on effort and discovery - an active education based on achievement.

Primary education in a changing society

(doc. DECS/EGT (83) 66)

Proposal for the operational programme of Project No. 8

(doc. DECS/EGT (83) 67)

by Mr Lucas ELTING, Ministry of Education and Sciences, Netherlands

Brief description of the characteristics of the primary school at the end of the 1960s, then at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, and what the primary school could be during the rest of the 1980s, bearing in mind the social changes taking place during those years, their impact on primary school teaching, and the innovations they entail.

Examination of the various proposals made by members of the project group with a view to determining the main theme, which was finally defined as "innovation in primary school teaching".

Presentation of the working methods and structures available, as well as the general outline of the future report.

Description of the new International Centre for Child Studies (ICCS)

by the ICET (United Kingdom)

(doc. DECS/EGT (83) Misc. 56)

Information paper on the ICCS. This centre is working with a new approach: the child as a whole is studied from every point of view. The aim is to help the child at every stage of development, from birth to adolescence, in terms of health, education, behaviour and family life. Relations with UNICEF, OECD, the Council of Europe, the EEC and other international organisations will be established.

Third All-European Conference of Directors of Educational Research Institutions on Research into Primary Education (5-10 years)

by Mr Maurice GALTON

(doc. DECS/EGT (84) Misc. 7 Or. Eng.)

Report on the discussions held at this conference, which centred on two subjects: the kind of primary education research being carried out in member states, and the kind of primary education research that needs to be carried out at international level, to determine the direction to be given to future innovations and make sure that they are satisfactorily implemented.

In conclusion, the conference defined three major areas for research, as follows: evaluation of primary education and its aims, the study programmes required to prepare the child for adult life and the establishment of closer links between the school and the community.

Conference on primary education in sparsely populated areas (organised by Interskola) Hvanneyri (Iceland) 24-29 July 1983

(doc. DECS/EGT (83) 90)

Brief history of the Interskola organisation and report on the conference. Five major themes were discussed: co-operation to improve rural schooling curriculum development and classroom practice, the professional development of teachers in rural schools; the rural school and the media; transition from compulsory schooling to further education.

The conclusions are presented in the form of recommendations.

Educational research workshop on the renewal of mathematics teaching in primary education Puidoux-Chexbres (Switzerland) 1-4 May 1984

by Mr Don HOLLINGSWORTH

(doc. DECS/EGT (84) 78)

Account of the eight papers given at this workshop on experiments conducted in different European countries.

Twelve countries met to assess the progress of current research into mathematics teaching in primary schools.

One of the main points that came out in the discussion of the papers is that mathematics teaching in the primary school should be seen as a whole range of experiences that the school should give the pupils, so that they gradually learn to view, analyse and represent real life situations in mathematical terms and so solve problems.

Primary education

- in Luxembourg, by Jean Pierre Oestreicher

  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 13)

- in the United Kingdom, by the British authorities

  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 14)

- in Ireland, by the Irish authorities

  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 18)

- in Turkey, by the Turkish authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 19)
- in France, by the French authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 20)
- in Switzerland, by Dr. August Oggenfuss
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 21)
- in the Netherlands, by the Dutch authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 22)
- in Spain, by the Ministry of Education and Science
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 48)
- in Belgium, by the Belgian authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 88)
- in Finland, by the Finnish authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 89)
- in Portugal, by the Portuguese authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 90)
- in Iceland, by the Icelandic authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 91)
- in Liechtenstein, by the Liechtenstein authorities
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- in the Federal Republic of Germany, by the German authorities
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- in Denmark, by the Danish authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 94)
- in Cyprus, by the Cypriot authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 95)
- in Norway, by the Norwegian authorities
  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 96

- in Austria, by the Austrian authorities

  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 104)

- in Sweden, by the Swedish authorities

  (doc. DECS/EGT (84) 105)

Report on the organisation of the primary education system - aims, structure, timetable, teacher training, problems and innovations in progress or in preparation.

A study on human rights education in primary schools by Professor A M Revedin

(doc. DECS/EGT (84) 7)

Analyses the history and the legal and philosophical origins of human rights, and the topicality of this universal problem, since the violation of human rights is not limited to certain non-democratic states.

Analysis of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, whose moral content is not confined to confirming the extension of human rights to the child, but strengthens that extension by emphasising the fact that the child must enjoy greater protection.

General proposals for education in human rights which must be based on the development of an awareness - albeit a childish one - of the problem and have an inter-disciplinary character.

Finally, an appendix giving a concrete example of human rights teaching in a primary school in Belgium.

Symposium on innovation in primary education in Western Europe

Han, Belgium, 17-21 October 1983

by Professor Roland Vandenberghe

(doc. DECS/EGT (84) 24)

Report on the symposium organised by the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe (CDCC) for the purpose of examining the aims and methods for the implementation of innovation in the primary school in Western Europe, in a time of economic constraints, socio-cultural changes and new technological developments.

Presentation of two examples of innovation in primary education; the project "renewal of the primary school" in Belgium, which began in September 1973, and the scheme to renew primary education in Cyprus (1983).

Conclusions and recommendations

Symposium on "Management of innovation in primary education"

(Noordwijk, Netherlands, 8-12 October 1984)
by Mr Roland Vandenberghe, October 1984

(doc. DECS/EGT (84) 99)

Report on the symposium on management of innovation in primary education in the Netherlands, whose main purpose was to present the new primary school system in the Netherlands for critical evaluation by the European public.

This innovation is characterised by the combining of nursery and primary education in basic education (for children from four to 12 years old) and the individualisation and differentiation of pupils having regard to the specific identity and needs of each child.

Report on the group visits to the schools taking part in the innovation process and their new features: the attention given to each child, the school climate, the pupils' attitude etc.